



Fallston Group™
THE REPUTATION AGENCY

Preparing for the Worst: Successfully Navigating a Media Ambush

A media ambush is generally defined as a sudden and unexpected interview, an "off anticipated topic" line of questioning during a planned interview, or a seemingly casual "By the way..." unanticipated question from a reporter that leads the interviewee down a path that was not anticipated. Remember, an ambush can happen in-person, telephonically or digitally.

Core ambush tactics to keep in mind:

- **Be predictive.** If you are part of an ongoing crisis, be prepared for an ambush with an "out statement" which accomplishes your message and enables an exit from the situation without being defensive.
- **Be polite.** Many ambushes include a news camera or recording device. Remaining calm and composed is critical.
- **Ask questions.** It is perfectly fair to question who a reporter is, what news outlet they represent and the topics they wish to cover.
- **Retain control.** Do not be swayed by persistent questions or become emotional. Slow the process down and do not engage at the velocity with which the reporter wants to engage.
- **Control the rules of engagement.** The reporter is seeking to intentionally blindside you and catch you off-guard in hopes of obtaining raw thoughts, emotion and relevant information to use in storytelling. Reporters will often resort to an ambush if they feel the subject of their story is intentionally unavailable or evasive. However, YOU can control the environment and information and can change the tone of the conversation (and, at times, the story) through your response.

Can I prevent being ambushed?

While it is impossible to guarantee you will not be ambushed by the news media during a critical time, you can take steps to control the rules of engagement or maintain low to no visibility. Remember to change your daily patterns, personally and professionally, and don't become predictable – this is a media relations and personal safety tactic. You may also wish to purchase a "no trespassing" sign to post on the perimeter of your personal property to prevent unwanted guests. Additionally, always be aware of your surroundings before you enter a public environment to avoid unwanted contact. Lastly, make certain you are in the right mindset, so the element of surprise is lost, if ambushed.

If I am ambushed, what specifically should I do?

- Stop and directly address the reporter. DO NOT interview while walking, getting into a car, elevator, front door of your home, etc.
- If asked a series of questions, defer to your "out statement" one more time or say, "I have nothing else to add," then move on after politely excusing yourself.
- Do not repeat the "out statement" more than once before deferring to the "nothing else to add" phrase.
- After concluding your remarks, politely excuse yourself then move along to your next appointment, using a slow, professional pace.
- Keep moving to your next appointment; do not express frustration, aggravation or dismay. Your body language counts and is just as, if not more important, than what you say!



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"Out Statement" to use in the event of media ambush:

"Thank you for your questions. While I wish I could elaborate, it is inappropriate for me to do so during the course of the independent review. All questions should be directed to UMMS' media relations department. I remain committed to UMMS and the world-class treatment they deliver to so many patients. I'm sorry I can't elaborate further; thank you for your interest."

If contacted by a member of the media via email, please respond this way:

"Thank you very much for your inquiry. Per Board policy, I am referring you to Michael Schwartzberg, UMMS Media Relations Director. His direct dial is 410.328.8920; and, he is copied on this email. Thank you." *Michael's email is MichaelSchwartzberg@umm.edu.

If the reporter is able to get you on the phone:

"Hi, how can I help you? [LISTEN TO THE REQUEST]. After listening, say "Thank you very much for your inquiry. Per Board policy, I am referring you to Michael Schwartzberg, UMMS Media Relations Director. His direct dial is 410.328.8920 and email is MichaelSchwartzberg@umm.edu. Thank you."

If ambushed on camera, simply stop and say:

"Thank you for your questions. While I wish I could elaborate, it is inappropriate for me to do so during the course of the independent review. All questions should be directed to UMMS' media relations department. I remain committed to UMMS and the world-class treatment they deliver to so many patients. I'm sorry I can't elaborate further; thank you for your interest." Proceed to your next destination.

If contacted via voicemail, mobile, landline or digitally:

Immediately contact Michael Schwartzberg, UMMS Media Relations Director. His direct dial is 410.328.8920 and email is MichaelSchwartzberg@umm.edu. And, notify Mary Lanham via email at mlanham2@umm.edu AND via mobile phone at 410.703.7628.

See Media Quick Tips below.



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MEDIA QUICK TIPS

Develop and articulate messages

- Know what you want your audience to know
- Be the expert – know your subject matter
- Be clear and concise
- Be passionate, focused and disciplined
- Repetition creates awareness
- Bridge to your core messages routinely
- Anticipate audience reaction to messages
- Test core messages with trusted stakeholders

Always

- Maintain eye contact with the interviewer
- Limit facial, hand and body movement
- Remember, you are never “off the record”
- Know and understand the facts
- Be decisive and truthful
- Know and commit to all stakeholders
- Illustrate leadership
- Provide perspective
- Be empathetic and listen
- Identify advocates and use one voice
- Correct misinformation
- Operate in a controlled setting
- Establish your pace
- Be professional and respectful
- Be conversational
- Practice, practice, practice

Never

- Speculate
- Be defensive
- Say “no comment”
- Repeat a negative
- Let misinformation stand as fact
- Run away or cover the camera lens
- Lie

King, Nancy Senator

From: Wollman, Jerry <jwollman@umm.edu>
Sent: Thursday, April 11, 2019 2:36 PM
Subject: UMMS Board Business Relationships Talking Points
Attachments: UMMS_Talking Points_Public Events_41019.docx

As promised at yesterday's UMMS Board meeting, our communications team drafted the attached talking points for you to use, if needed.

Thank you,

Jerry Wollman
SVP & Chief Administrative Officer
UMMS
Office: 410-328-6555

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UMMS Board Business Relationships Talking Points – as of 4/10/19

- The issues in question have no impact whatsoever on the quality of care we're able to provide for our patients on a day-to-day basis.
- We're staying focused on our mission and commitment: To provide exceptional, safe care to the people of Maryland and beyond.
- We absolutely recognize there's some room for improvement when it comes to our Board governance and management practices and have already taken immediate steps to make those improvements. The system is taking this very seriously.
- John Ashworth has stepped in to serve as interim president and CEO. John has been with the organization for more than three decades. He has an intimate understanding of our system and its workforce, and a clear vision of how to navigate through times of transition.
- On the internal review: We've appointed an independent, external firm to conduct an immediate and comprehensive review of our Board governance and practices, and provide recommended best practices moving forward.
- On the legislation: We're working toward activating the provisions outlined in the recent legislation. I can tell you there is mutual alignment among all interested parties to pursue optimal, long-term governance and accountability.

King, Nancy Senator

From: Wollman, Jerry <jwollman@umm.edu>
Sent: Friday, April 5, 2019 2:18 PM
To: 'Alexander Williams'; Burch, Stephen; Stephen Burch (Calendar); Busch, Michael Delegate; Butler, R. Alan; Caret, Robert; jhip@[REDACTED]; Coale, John; D. Bruce Poole; Deanmed; Gardner, Wayne; George Doetsch; Gonzales, Louise; Gossett, Barry; James Harkins; James T. Smith (Jim.smith@[REDACTED]); Ken Moreland (kmoreland78@[REDACTED]); King, Nancy Senator; Korky Onal (korky@[REDACTED]); Leong-Hong, Belkis; Louis P. Jenkins Jr. Esq. (louis@[REDACTED]); Louis Pope (louismppope@[REDACTED]); Melhem, Elias; O'Connor, Kevin; Perman, Jay; Reece, Albert; robert@[REDACTED]; Rowen, Lisa; scottrifkinmd@[REDACTED] Smith, James; Stoler, Len
Cc: Lanham, Mary; Schwartzberg, Michael; Gartside, Joan; Arthur, Megan; Wasserman, Mark; Jacobs, Donna; Jones Bryce, Kristin; Bachrach, Christine; STAVELY, Jeffrey; 'Robert Weinhold'
Subject: Potential UMMS Media Coverage

Good Afternoon,

Kevin Rector, a Baltimore Sun reporter, is writing a story and is calling many UMMS Board members for comment. We request that, if contacted and you speak to him, you simply state that you are not at liberty to comment and refer him to UMMS media relations via email at Michaelischwartzberg.umm.edu. If he leaves a message, we advise not calling him back. Let us know if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Jerry Wollman

SVP & Chief Administrative Officer

UMMS

Office: 410-328-6555

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